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THE BALLADE OF  
TRUTHFUL CHARLES

AND OTHER POEMS

BY  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

LONDON :  
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION  
1910



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15.2.10

My dear Wise

I am very glad  
that you are going to submit  
to this operation, which I  
hope will be quite a slight  
matter. I should hope, indeed,  
that the enforced fortnight in  
bed may give you a very  
much-needed rest.

As your leisure -  
in bed - you may reflect on  
the pamphlet of last poems  
of A.C.S. In the first place,

Some bibliographical note  
of where these things have  
previously appeared is ab-  
solutely necessary.

Then, to complete  
this sheet of uncollected  
poems, should not the  
verses in the "Tatler" (see  
your Bibliography 92-94)  
be added?

And "Disgrace: a  
dramatic monologue"?

And "May 1885"?



I do not know whether all the poems described in pp. 101 to 105 of your Bibliography have been included in volumes published by S. later than 1897, but it would be well to go carefully through the list.

My idea is that this pamphlet will have very great interest if it is really inclusive of all poems printed

by S. but hitherto not  
collected in book or pamphlet  
form.

On all this I  
give you time to meditate  
in bed, and meanwhile I  
retain the proof. With every  
hope for your speedy and  
complete recovery, and  
hoping, when you are able to  
write, that you will report  
yourself I am ever  
sincerely yours

Edmund Gosse

## POEMS



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*The "Epigram on Clough" is here printed for the first time from the original Manuscript. The remaining Poems had already appeared in various Magazines, but remained uncollected at the date of the Poet's death.*

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THE  
BALLADE OF TRUTHFUL CHARLES

*ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα.*—HOMER.

*ἔχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἀΐδαο πύλῃσιν  
ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθῃ ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπῃ.*—ID.

Charles Stuart, the crownless king whose hand  
Sways Erin's sceptre,—so they sing,  
The bards of holy Liarland—  
Can give his tongue such scope and swing,  
So smooth of speech, so sure of sting,  
That all who feel its touch must dread it :  
But now we hear it witnessing—  
“ I meant to cheat you when I said it.”

Base England felt his vocal brand  
Burn on her blushless brow, and cling  
Like fire : though grave and calm and bland,  
His voice could touch so deep a string,

That souls more pure than flowers in spring,  
Were moved to follow where he led ; it  
Rang out so true : we hear it ring—  
“ I meant to cheat you when I said it.”

Convinced, appalled, confused, unmanned,  
We see, splashed black with mud they fling,  
Parnells and Pigotts lie or stand ;  
We see their faith, how pure a thing,  
Their cause, how past all challenging ;  
We read their creed, as Gladsniff read it  
And worshipped. Then a word takes wing—  
“ I meant to cheat you when I said it.”

Prince of pure patriots, “ blameless king,”  
Is this conducive to your credit ?  
No shift, no plea but this to bring ?  
“ I meant to cheat you when I said it.”

## REMINISCENCE

LEIGHTON, BURTON, AND MRS. SARTORIS

*Vichy. September, 1869.*

A light has passed that never shall pass away,  
A sun has set whose rays are unquelled of right  
The loyal grace, the courtesy bright as day,  
The strong sweet radiant spirit of life and light  
That shone and smiled and lightened on all men's  
sight,  
The kindly life whose tune was the tune of May,  
For us now dark, for love and for fame is bright.

Nay, not for us that live as the fen-fires live,  
As stars that shoot and shudder with life and die,  
Can death make dark that lustre of life or give  
The grievous gift of trust in oblivion's lie.

Days dear and far death touches, and draws them  
nigh  
And bids the grief that broods on their graves  
forgive  
The day that seems to mock them as clouds that fly.  
If life be life more faithful than shines on sleep  
When dreams take wing and lighten and fade like  
flame,  
Then haply death may be not a death so deep  
That all things past are past for it wholly—fame,  
Love, loving-kindness, seasons that went and came,  
And left their light on life as a seal to keep  
Winged memory fast and heedful of time's dead  
claim.  
Death gives back life and light to the sunless years  
Whose suns long sunken set not for ever. Time  
Blind, fierce, and deaf as tempest, relents, and hears  
And sees how bright the days and how sweet their  
chime  
Rang, shone, and passed in music that matched the  
clime  
Wherein we met rejoicing—a joy that cheers  
Sorrow, to see the night as the dawn sublime

The days that were, outlighten the days that are,  
And eyes now darkened shine as the stars we see—  
And hear not sing, impassionate star to star,  
As once we heard the music that haply he  
Hears, high in heaven if ever a voice may be  
The same in heaven, the same as on earth, afar  
From pain and earth as heaven from the heaving  
sea.

A woman's voice, divine as a bird's by dawn  
Kindled and stirred to sunward, arose and held  
Our souls that heard, from earth as from sleep  
withdrawn,  
And filled with light as stars, and as stars  
compelled  
To move by might of music, elate while quelled,  
Subdued by rapture, lit as a mountain lawn  
By morning whence all heaven in the sunrise  
welled.

And her the shadow of death as a robe clasped  
round  
Then : and as morning's music she passed away.

And he then with us, warrior and wanderer, crowned  
With fame that shone from eastern on western  
day,  
More strong, more kind, than praise or than grief  
might say,  
Has passed now forth of shadow by sunlight bound,  
Of night shot through with light that is frail as  
May.

May dies, and light grows darkness, and life grows  
death :  
Hope fades and shrinks and falls as a changing  
leaf :  
Remembrance, touched and kindled by love's live  
breath,  
Shines, and subdues the shadow of time called  
grief,  
The shade whose length of life is as life's date  
brief  
With joy that broods on the sunlight past, and  
saith  
That thought and love hold sorrow and change in  
fief.

Sweet, glad, bright spirit, kind as the sun seems  
kind

When earth and sea rejoice in his gentler spell,  
Thy face that was we see not : bereft and blind  
We see but yet, rejoicing to see, and dwell  
Awhile in days that heard not the death-day's  
knell,

A light so bright that scarcely may sorrow find  
Our old sweet word that hails thee and mourns—  
Farewell.

## CZAR LOUIS XVI

*Adsit omen!*

Peace on his lying lips, and on his hands  
    Blood, smiled and cowered the tyrant, seeing afar  
    His bondslaves perish and acclaim their Czar.  
Now, sheltered scarce by Murder's loyal bands,  
Clothed on with slaughters, naked else, he stands ;  
    He flies and stands not. Now the bloodred star  
    That marks the face of midnight as a scar,  
Tyranny, trembles on the brow it brands,  
And shudders towards the pit where deathless death  
    Leaves no life more for liars and slayers to live.  
    Fly, coward, and cower, while time is thine to  
    fly :  
Cherish awhile thy terror-shortened breath,  
    Not as thy grandsire died, if justice give  
    Judgment, but slain by judgment thou shalt  
    die.

*January 24th, 1905.*



## A CAROL FOR CHARITY

Winter, friend of health and wealth,  
Hailed of goodly girls and boys,  
Slays the poor by strength and stealth,  
Makes their lives his lifeless toys.

One boy goes galloping over the moorland,  
Wild with delight of the sunshine and speed,  
Blithe as a bird on his bleak bright foreland,  
Glad as the wind or his own glad steed.

One, with darkness and toil fast bound,  
Bound in misery and iron fast,  
Drags his nakedness underground,  
Sees the mine as the world at last.

Winter, lord of laughing Yule,  
Winter, weeping on his dead,  
Bids us ease his iron rule,  
Bids us bring his poor men bread.

## MEMORIAL VERSES

### ON THE DEATH OF KARL BLIND

Across the wide-winged years  
Whose sound no hearkener hears  
Passing in thunder of reverberate flight,  
Nor any seer may see  
What fruit of them shall be,  
Shines from the death-struck past a living light,  
And music breathed of memory's breath  
Attunes the darkling silence born of earthly death.

Through all the thunderous time,  
Now silent and sublime,  
When Right in hopeless hope waged war on Wrong,  
His head shone high, his hand  
Grasped as a burning brand  
The sword of faith which weakness makes more  
strong,  
And they for whom it shines hold fast  
The trust that Time bequeaths for truth to assure at  
last.

Not prison, not the breath  
Of doom denouncing death,  
Could make the manhood in him burn less high  
For one breath's space than when  
It shone for following men,  
A sign to show how man might live or die  
With freedom in triumphant sight  
And hope elate above all fluctuant chance of fight.

The German fame of old,  
By Roman hands inscrolled  
As bright beyond all nations else borne down,  
Shone round his banished head,  
As round the deathless dead  
With light bequeathed of one coequal crown :  
And now that his and theirs are one  
No time shall see the setting of that sovereign sun.

All this must all time know  
While memories ebb and flow  
Till out of blind forgetfulness is born  
Fame deathless as the day,  
When none may think to say

Her light is less than noon and even and morn :  
When glories forged in hell-fire fade,  
And warrior empires wither in the waste they  
made.

When all a forger's fame  
Is shrivelled up in shame ;  
When all imperial notes of praise and prayer  
And hoarse thanksgiving raised  
To the abject God they praised  
For murderous mercies are but poisonous air ;  
When Bismarck and his William lie  
Low even as he they warred on—damned too deep to  
die.

For how should history bid  
Their names go free, lie hid,  
Stand scathless of her Tacitean brand ?  
From them forgetfulness,  
Too bright a boon to bless  
Crime deep as hell, withholds her healing hand ;  
But while their fame was fresh and rank  
The old light of German glory here nor sank nor  
shrank.

Here, where all wrongs find aid,  
Where all foul strengths are stayed,  
Where empire means not evil, here was one  
Whose glance, whose smile, whose voice  
Bade all their souls rejoice  
Who hailed in sight of English sea and sun  
A head sublime as theirs who died  
For England ere her praise was Freedom's crowning  
pride.

Not even his head shone higher,  
Whose only loftiest lyre  
Were meet to hail faith pure and proud as his :  
A pride all praise must wrong  
Less high than soared the song  
Wherein the light that was and was not is :  
The lyric light whence Milton lit  
The darkness of the darkling days that knew not it.

Less high my praise may soar :  
But when it lives no more  
Silent and fervent in the secret heart  
That holds for all time fast  
The sense of time long past,

No sense of life will then therein have part.

No thought may speak, no words enshrine,  
My thanks to him who gave Mazzini's hand to  
mine.

Our glorious century gone  
Beheld no head that shone  
More clear across the storm, above the foam,  
More steadfast in the fight  
Of warring night and light,  
True to the truth whose star leads heroes home,  
Than his who, loving all things free,  
Loved as with English passion of delight our sea.

The joy of glorious age  
To greet the sea's glad rage  
With answering rapture as of bird or boy,  
When sundawn thrilled the foam  
And bade the sea's flock home,  
Crowned all a foiled heroic life with joy  
Bright as the light of living flame,  
That glows, a deathless gloriole, round his deathless  
name.

## TO A LEEDS POET

(J. W. INCHBOLD)

If far beyond the shadow of the sleep  
A place there be for souls without a stain ;  
Where peace is perfect and delight more deep  
Than seas or skies that change and shine again,  
There, none of all unsullied souls that live  
May hold a surer station, none may lend  
More light to Hope or Memory's lamp, nor give  
More joys than Thine to those that called Thee  
Friend.

1888.

## EPITAPH ON A SLANDERER

He whose heart and soul and tongue  
Once above ground stunk and stung,  
Now, less noisome than before,  
Stinks here still, but stings no more.



## NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1889

*No Englishman will need to be reminded of the date on which Westminster Abbey was honoured by the funeral of Robert Browning.*

All the west, whereon the sunset sealed the dead  
year's glorious grave  
Fast with seals of light and fire and cloud that light  
and fire illume,  
Glow at heart and kindles earth and heaven with  
joyous blush and bloom  
Warm and wide as life, and glad of death which only  
slays to save.  
As a tide-reconquered sea-rock lies aflush with the  
influent wave  
Lies the light aflush with darkness, lapped about  
with lustrous gloom,  
Even as life with death and time with fame, and  
memory with the tomb  
Where a dead man hath for vassals fame the serf and  
time the slave.

Far from earth as heaven, the steadfast light with-  
drawn, superb, suspense,

Burns in dumb divine expansion of illimitable  
flower :

Moonrise whets the shadows' edges keen as noon-tide :  
hence and thence

Glow the presence from us passing, shines and  
passes not the power.

Souls arise whose word remembered is as spirit  
within the sense :

All the hours are theirs of all the seasons : death  
has but his hour.

## DISGUST:

### A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

*A woman and her husband, having been converted from free thought to Calvinism, and being utterly miserable in consequence, resolve to end themselves by poison. The man dies, but the woman is rescued by application of the stomach-pump.*

#### I.

PILLS? talk to me of your pills? Well, that, I must say, is cool.

Can't bring my old man round? he was always a stubborn old fool.

If I hadn't taken precautions—a warning to all that wive—

He might not have been dead, and I might not have been alive.

#### II.

You would like to know, if I please, how it was that our troubles began?

You see, we were brought up Agnostics, I and my poor old man.

And we got some idea of selection and evolution, you  
know—

Professor Huxley's doing—where does he expect to  
go !

### III.

Well, then came trouble on trouble on trouble—I  
may say, a peck—

And his cousin was wanted one day on the charge of  
forging a cheque—

And his puppy died of the mange—my parrot choked  
on its perch.

This was the consequence, was it, of not going weekly  
to church ?

### IV.

So we felt that the best if not only thing that  
remained to be done

On an earth everlastingly moving about a perpetual  
sun,

Where worms breed worms to be eaten of worms  
that have eaten their betters—

And reviewers are barely civil—and people get spite-  
ful letters—

And a famous man is forgot ere the minute hand can  
tick nine—  
Was to send in our P.P.C., and purchase a packet of  
strychnine.

## V.

Nay—but first we thought it was rational—only  
fair—  
To give both parties a hearing—and went to the  
meeting-house there,  
At the curve of the street that runs from the Stag to  
the old Blue Lion.  
“Little Zion” they call it—a deal more “little” than  
“Zion.”

## VI.

And the preacher preached from the text, “Come out  
of her.” Hadn’t we come?  
And we thought of the shepherd in Pickwick—and  
fancied a flavour of rum  
Balmily borne on the wind of his words—and my man  
said, “Well,  
Let’s get out of this, my dear—for his text has a  
brimstone smell.”

## VII.

So we went, O God, out of chapel—and gazed, ah  
God, at the sea.  
And I said nothing to him. And he said nothing to  
me.

## VIII.

And there, you see, was an end of it all. It was  
obvious, in fact,  
That, whether or not you believe in the doctrine  
taught in a tract,  
Life was not in the least worth living, Because, don't  
you see?  
Nothing that can't be, can, and what must be, must.  
Q.E.D.  
And the infinitesimal sources of Infinite Unideality  
Curve in to the central abyss of a sort of a queer  
Personality  
Whose refraction is felt in the nebulæ strewn in the  
pathway of Mars  
Like the parings of nails Æonian—clippings and  
snippings of stars—

Shavings of suns that revolve and evolve and involve  
and at times

Give a sweet astronomical twang to remarkably  
hobbling rhymes.

## IX.

And the sea curved in with a moan—and we thought  
how once—before

We fell out with those atheist lecturers—once, ah,  
once and no more,

We read together, while midnight blazed like the  
Yankee flag,

A reverend gentleman's work—the Conversion of  
Colonel Quagg.

And out of its pages we gathered this lesson of  
doctrine pure—

Zephaniah Stockdolloger's gospel—a word that  
deserves to endure

Infinite millions on millions of infinite Æons to  
come—

“Vocation,” says he, “is vocation, and duty duty.  
Some.”

## X.

And duty, said I, distinctly points out—and vocation,  
said he,

Demands as distinctly—that I should kill you, and  
that you should kill me.

The reason is obvious—we cannot exist without  
creeds—who can?

So we went to the chemist's—a highly respectable  
church-going man—

And bought two packets of poison. You wouldn't  
have done so? Wait.

It's evident, Providence is not with you, ma'am, the  
same thing as Fate.

Unconscious cerebration educes God from a fog,  
But spell God backwards, what then? Give it up?  
the answer is, dog.

(I don't exactly see how this last verse is to scan,  
But that's a consideration I leave to the secular man.)

## XI.

I meant of course to go with him—as far as I pleased  
—but first

To see how my old man liked it—I thought perhaps  
he might burst.



I didn't wish it—but still it's a blessed release for a  
wife—

And he saw that I thought so—and grinned in  
derision—and threatened my life

If I made wry faces—and so I took just a sip—and  
he—

Well—you know how it ended—he didn't get over  
me.

## XII.

Terrible, isn't it? Still, on reflection, it might have  
been worse.

He might have been the unhappy survivor, and  
followed my hearse.

"Never do it again"? Why, certainly not. You  
don't

Suppose I should think of it, surely? But anyhow—  
there—I won't.

# ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

## AN EPIGRAM

There was a bad poet named Clough,  
Whom it's perfectly useless to puff :  
    For the public, though dull,  
    Has not quite such a skull  
As belongs to believers in Clough.

LONDON :

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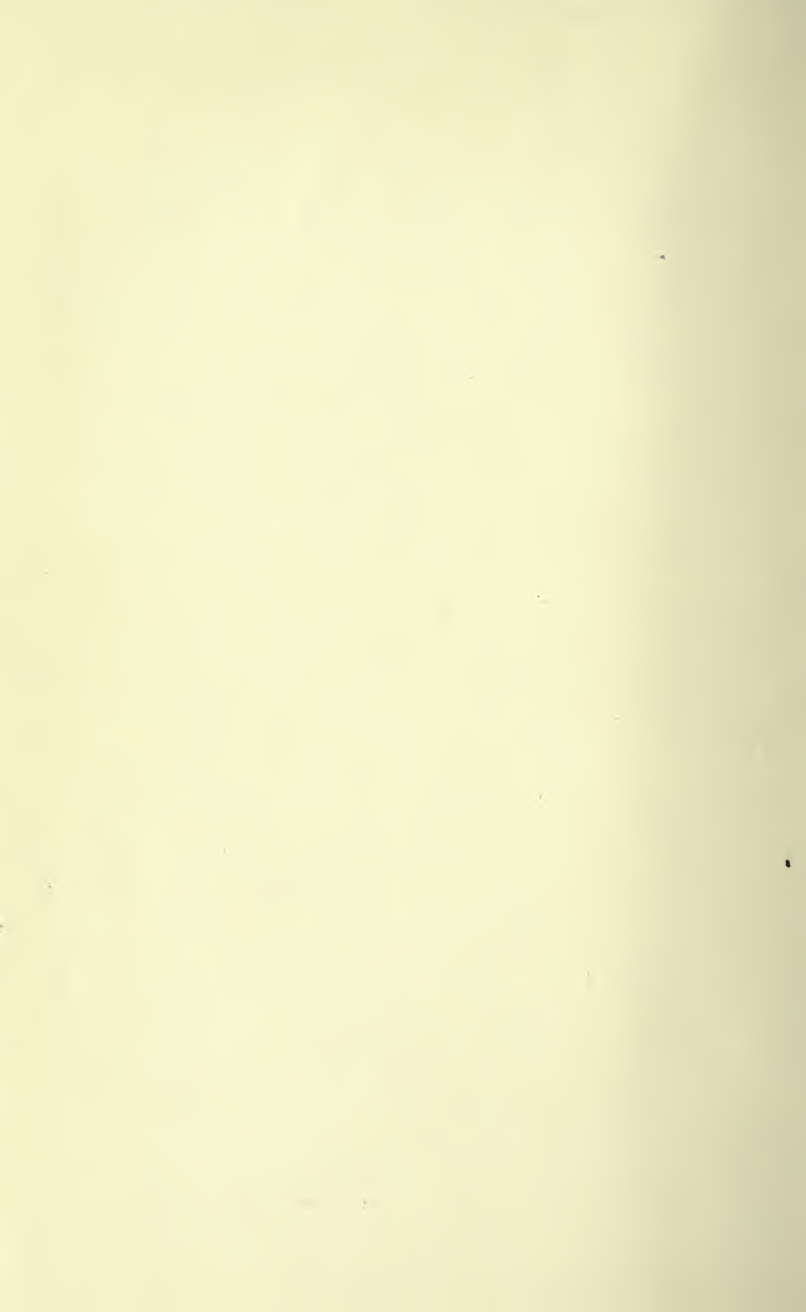






















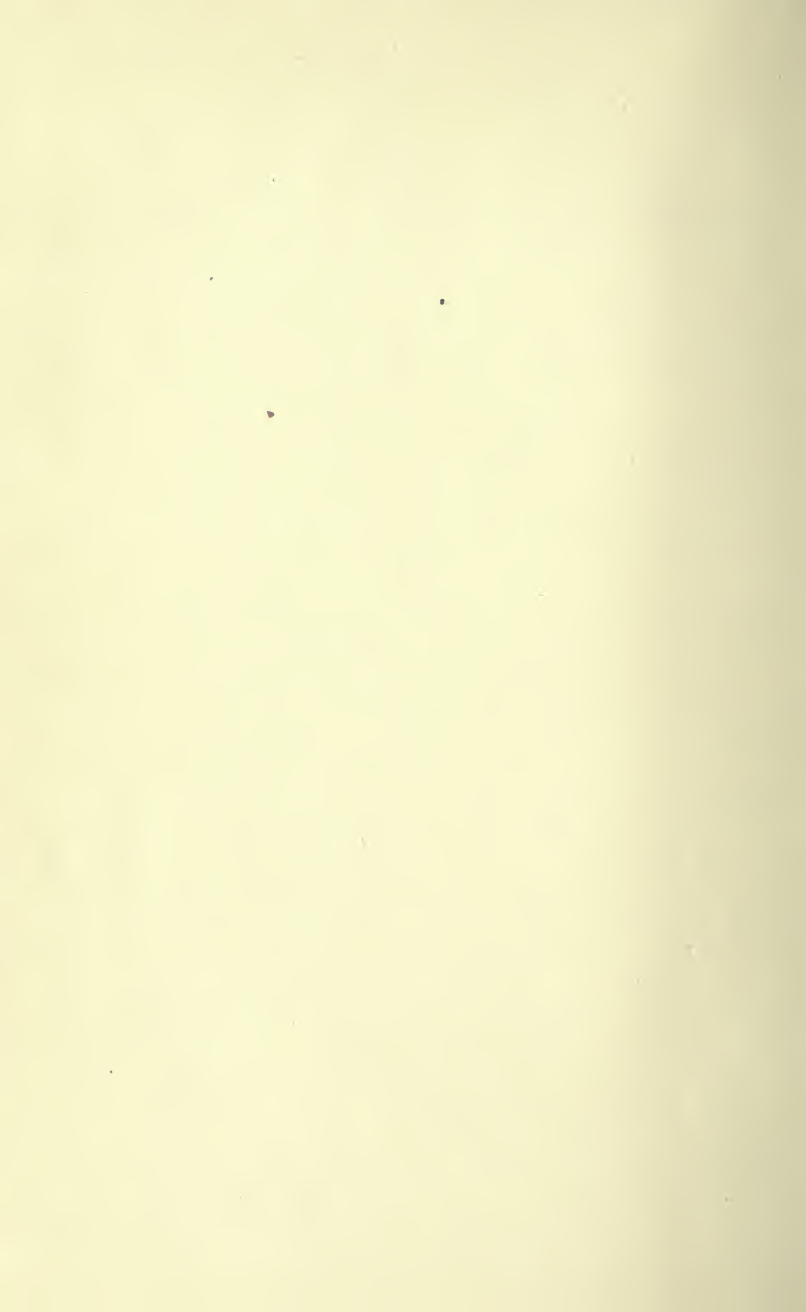


















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